



Rodney Rocha – The Pursuit of Images of Columbia

Interview of 9/22/2010 – Transcript

What did I learn?

What do I want people to remember from this experience? It's hard to put that in just one or two items but I would want people to be... to listen to their intuition and in this case we're engineers, it's based on experience. Intuition to me is an inference made from insufficient data but what I have behind that is engineering experience and lessons learned and observations from past successes and possibly past failures and what we've learned from that. I think intuition is one of those things that come in a flash and we have a feeling about things. However, use your data also. If one needs to communicate a concern, talk to your supervisor. Get your lower level support first and move it up the line up the management chain but always gather the group behind one. I realize now there are brilliant and very knowledgeable engineers who sometimes have concerns but they do not necessarily have the personality to be assertive in a meeting where there could be push back, hostility or disbelief, or whatever. That can intimidate some people. Some engineers I have good friends of mine are really good at it. They'll push and get the door down to get their message heard and they do their homework too but not everyone is like that. So I've learned to try to gather community support for that.

Also, I think we have an obligation to listen when that's happening to someone else. That person with the concern or urgent question or issue can very quickly fall through the cracks because they didn't have the wherewithal or the strength to push it forward. That's not a character flaw. It's just that some of us are good at being assertive and some of us are not but we all have valuable information to give. So try to pay attention to one that's happening. I've seen at lower levels, not managers involved, a group bullies one person with a minority view. We need to stop that. And again it can happen in mild forms or in strong forms and people may not realize that they're doing that but the minority view may just fall through the cracks and disappear because the majority won. I've seen people in the minority view withdraw. So I think we're obliged to correct that by paying attention when that happens and help them. I may not agree with that view. I may or may not. But we have to help them do that and push that message forward. I remember a case a few years ago when the minority view became the majority view because more data came in and it was able to validate that view.

And I guess the other thing I've learned is I can't change large organizations, the culture or the mindset but I have learned to change myself and I think there is a ripple effect. By interacting with my colleague, we can serve as role models, I can help with lessons and observations but our behavior is what influences people. I think people remember that. That has a small ripple effect and I think they'll pass it along.